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## ACAPULCO AND THE MANILA GALLEON

WILLIAM LYTLE SCHURZ

When Andrés de Urdaneta selected Acapulco as the American terminal of the Philippine-American navigation,<sup>1</sup> he chose the best harbor on the west coast of America, with the exception of San Francisco. Legaspi's expedition for the occupation of the Philippines sailed from Navidad, but Acapulco soon took the place of the more northerly port. In 1572 Viceroy Enríquez wrote to Philip II: "Acapulco is coming to be the first port for the trade with the Philippines, because of its nearness to the City of Mexico."<sup>2</sup> He further declared it superior to either Navidad, Guatulco, or Tehuantepec. Frequent proposals were made during the history of the galleon trade to change the terminal from Acapulco, for which there were claimed greater accessibility to Mexico, a superior climate, or other advantages. The most serious schemes of this sort were for the transfer to San Blas or to Val de Banderas on the Guadalajara coast.<sup>3</sup> As the northwest provinces of the viceroyalty became more thickly settled in the eighteenth century, the movement to have the galleons put in at a northern harbor gained strength. Particularly was this so after the establishment of the *Departamento* of San Blas, when the latter port had become increasingly important, because of its position as the start-

<sup>1</sup>Fernández Duro, *Armada*, II, 233. "Parece que converná [conviene] que el astillero que está en el dicho Puerto [Navidad] donde se hacen los Navios para el descubrimiento y navegacion de la mar del Poniente se mude á otro Puerto mas comodo y sano. . . . El Puerto de Acapulco parece que tiene buenas partes, para que en el se arme el astillero para hacer Navios, é para que en el sea la carga y descargo dellos, por ser uno de los buenos Puertos que hay en lo descubierto de las Indias, grande, y seguro, y muy sano y de buenas aguas, y mucha pesqueria, de mucha madera para la ligazon de los Navios, y tener á cinco, ó seis leguas, y pocas mas mucha madera para tablazon, y pinos para masteles y entenas." Urdaneta, *Derrotero muy especial . . . de la navegacion . . . desde el puerto de Acapulco á las islas de Poniente, . . . con la descripcion circunstanciada, así del puerto de Acapulco como del de Navidad, y las propiedades y ventajas de cada uno de ellos*, 1561, *Documentos inéditos* . . . *Ultramar*, II, 119-20.

<sup>2</sup>Enríquez to the King, April 6, 1572, *A. de I.*, 58-3-8.

<sup>3</sup>The Queen-Regent to the Viceroy, September 18, 1674, *A. de I.*, 103-3-2; the King to the Viceroy and the *Audiencia*, April 16, 1688, *A. de I.*, 105-2-3.

ing-point for the new activities along the coast of California and farther to the northward. In his instructions to his successor, Viceroy Revillagigedo contended for the retention of the terminal at Acapulco,<sup>4</sup> but Branciforte favored San Blas, while he proposed that the fair be held at Tepic.<sup>5</sup> However, by that time the Philippine commerce was notoriously on the decline, and Acapulco was permitted to hold the position which she had occupied for over two centuries by right of official inertia and her incomparable haven.

The harbor is nearly surrounded by precipitous mountains, whose abrupt descent on their southern side leaves but a small shelf of land for habitation, and also accounts for its unusual depth, which is so great that the galleon was sometimes made fast to a tree on the shore, instead of anchoring out in the bay.<sup>6</sup> The entrance, which opens toward the southwest, is broken by the Isla de la Roqueta into two mouths of unequal width. The easterly pass, known as the *Boca Grande*, has a breadth of about a mile and a half, while the other, or *Boca Chica*, is only about 260 yards wide. Though the breadth of the former admits seas and winds that would interfere with the security of vessels lying opposite this mouth, ships find entire safety when moored in front of the town in the sheltered inner bay, which projects to the northwest from the main body of the harbor. Thus, the port has the advantage of being both safe and deep.

Domingo Fernández de Navarete, a much-travelled friar, called it "the best and safest harbor in the world, as was duly asserted by those who have seen many others."<sup>7</sup> Lord Anson considered it "the securest and finest in all the northern parts of the Pacific Ocean."<sup>8</sup> Malaspina, one of the most skilled of Spanish naviga-

<sup>4</sup>*Instrucción que dejó el Virrey de Nueva España, Conde de Revillagigedo, del estado de aquel Reyno á su sucesor, el Marqués de Branciforte*, June 30, 1794, *A. de I.*, 88-5-19.

<sup>5</sup>Branciforte to Godoy, September 26, 1796, *A. de I.*, *Estado: Mexico*, legajo 6.

<sup>6</sup>"When the galeon arrives in this port, she is generally moored on its western side to two trees." Anson, *Voyage*, 227.

<sup>7</sup>*Tratados históricos, políticos, éthicos, y religiosos de la monarchia de China* (1676), B. and R., XXXVII, 285.

<sup>8</sup>*Op. cit.* Of the size of the harbor, Dampier remarks: "The Port of Acapulco is very commodious for the reception of Ships, and so large, that some hundreds may safely Ride there without damnifying each other." *Voyages*, I, 262.

tors of the latter eighteenth century, a scientific seaman of the type of Cook and Laperouse, favored the further development of Acapulco as the Spanish naval base for the Northern Pacific and as a great commercial port.<sup>9</sup> For these purposes he held it much superior to San Blas. "No one can deny," he said, "that Acapulco has great advantages which are found together in very few ports of the globe."<sup>10</sup>

Humboldt, who saw the place in 1803, thus describes the harbor, which he called "the finest of all those on the coast of the great ocean,"<sup>11</sup> and again, "one of the finest ports in the known world";<sup>12</sup> "The port of Acapulco forms an immense basin cut in granite rocks. . . . I have seen few situations in either hemisphere of a more savage aspect, I would say at the same time more dismal and more romantic. The masses of rocks bear in their form a strong resemblance to the dentilated crest of Montserrat in Catalonia. . . . This rocky coast is so steep that a vessel of the line may almost touch it without running the smallest danger, because there is every where from 10 to 12 fathoms water."<sup>13</sup>

Gabriel Lafond de Lurey said of the port and its surroundings: "This bay forms the finest and safest port along the entire Mexican coast. It is immense, and extends over three leagues inland, with a width of about one league. The anchorage is everywhere excellent, and a ship is everywhere sheltered from all the winds, for it is surrounded in all directions by mountains, which close it almost hermetically, and even shut out the view of the sea. The whole aspect is sombre and wild, and inspires a profound melancholy. The shore that rims the bay offers the very image of chaos."<sup>14</sup> Another French navigator of the same period, Abel du Petit-Thouars, writes of the location of Acapulco: "Some lofty mountains serve it as ramparts to west and north. To

<sup>9</sup>Malaspina and Bustamante, *Viaje político-científico alrededor del mundo*, (Madrid, 1885), 451. The voyage covered the years 1789-94.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 131.

<sup>11</sup>*Political Essay*, I, Int., XXXIV.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, IV, 55.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 56. "The Bay of Acapulco contains in its vast extent but one shallow, which is not 40 metres in depth, and which has the name of St. Anne, because it was found out in 1781, by the unexpected loss of the ship *Santa Ana* belonging to the trade of Lima." *Ibid.*, p. 58.

<sup>14</sup>*Voyages autour du monde*, (Paris, 1843), 88.

the south it is protected from the sea by a wooded peninsula of moderate height, which shelters the anchorage. Towards the east the view extends over the harbor and the peninsula which separates it from Puerto Marqués and the open sea."<sup>15</sup>

Acapulco itself was of no importance except as the terminal of the Asiatic galleon line and of a southerly coastwise trade of lesser consequence. "As for the City of *Acapulco*," says Gemelli Careri, "I think it might more properly be call'd a poor Village of Fishermen, than the chief Mart of the South Sea, and Port for the Voyage to *China*; so mean and wretched are the Houses being made of nothing but Wood, Mud and Straw."<sup>16</sup> By 1598 there were 250 houses of various kinds in the town,<sup>17</sup> the majority of which could scarcely have been more than huts or cabins. Among the public or religious buildings were the *Contaduría*, or headquarters of the treasury officials, a "cathedral," or parish church, a Franciscan convent, and the Hospital of San Juan de Dios. However, none of these were imposing edifices, though the religious establishments were bountifully supported by the piety of those who had survived the galleon voyage or the inclemencies and risks of the journey from Mexico. To the northeast of the town was situated the Castle of San Diego, which protected the town and the anchorage ground of the galleons from the incursions of foreigners. During most of its history there were mounted on its bastions some forty or more brass cannon of large bore.<sup>18</sup> But, whatever its actual strength, it had almost as forbidding a reputation among the enemies of Spain as did the formidable works of Cartagena and San Juan Ulua, and it at least fulfilled its function more effectually than did either of those great fortresses.

The ordinary population of Acapulco consisted of Indians and Orientals, and of *mestizos* and mulattoes of every possible degree of miscegenation. This nondescript lot were generically classed

<sup>15</sup>*Voyage autour du monde sur la frégate la Venus, pendant les années 1836-1839*, (Paris, 1841), II, 201.

<sup>16</sup>Churchill, *Voyages*, IV, 502.

<sup>17</sup>*Oficiales reales* to the King, April 12, 1598, *A. de I.*, 60-4-30.

<sup>18</sup>Gemelli, in Churchill, *op. cit.*, pp. 503-4. In the latter eighteenth century the castle contained over 80 guns.

outside of Acapulco as "Chinos."<sup>19</sup> Few Spaniards remained in the town beyond the term of the *feria*, at which time the permanent population of the place was greatly increased by the influx of thousands from Mexico, Peru, and the Philippines.<sup>20</sup>

The natural environment of the place was not favorable to the growth of a flourishing population of whites. Not only was the country to the rear of the town so sterile and waterless that provisions had to be brought from a distance, but the climate was most noxious to any but the mongrel inhabitants who had become inured to its intemperate heat and immune to its "Distempers."<sup>21</sup> The extreme heat of the *tierra caliente* was little mitigated by the circumstances which sometimes favorably modified the weather in other places in the same climatic zone, but it was aggravated by peculiar local conditions. Thus, the rock walls behind the town not only reflected the heat into the basin, until the air was stifling, but this very enclosure kept out the sea-breezes and prevented the circulation of air within the harbor. However, in the latter part of the eighteenth century Don Josef Barreiro, the castellan of the port, had a gap cut through the hill which intervenes between the town and the sea in order to admit the cooling breezes from off the ocean. Humboldt declares that he experienced the salutary effects of this "bold undertaking."<sup>22</sup> "Acapulco is one of the most unhealthy places of the New Continent," he said. "The unfortunate inhabitants . . . breathe a burning air, full of insects, and vitiated by putrid emanations. For a great part of the year they perceive the sun only through a bed of vapours of an olive hue. . . . The heat must be still more oppressive, the

<sup>19</sup>Pedro Calderón Henríquez to the King, n. d., *A. de I.*, 108-4-17. Humboldt lumps them together as "people of colour." *Op. cit.*, II, 187.

<sup>20</sup>Juan Díez de la Calle said that in his day there were about 150 citizens [Spaniards?] in the place, including the garrison, which generally consisted of a company of infantry. *Memorial, y noticias y reales del imperio de las Indias Occidentales* (Madrid, 1646), f. 60. Humboldt gives the stable population at the beginning of the nineteenth century as about 4000, which was swelled to over 9000 at the time of the fair. *Op. cit.*

<sup>21</sup>"This ill Temper of the Air, and the Mountainous Soil, are the cause that *Acapulco* must be supply'd with Provisions from other Parts; and therefore it is dear living there, because a Man cannot eat well under a piece of Eight a Day; the place besides being dear, is dirty, and inconvenient. For these reasons, it is inhabited by none but Blacks and Mulattoes." Gemelli, *op. cit.*, p. 503.

<sup>22</sup>*Op. cit.*, IV, 145.

air more stagnant, and the existence of man more painful at Acapulco, than at Vera Cruz."<sup>23</sup> Simón de Anda said that Vera Cruz, which was never famed for salubrity, was a paradise in comparison with the "abbreviated inferno" of Acapulco, with its "heat and its venomous serpents, and the constant trembling of the earth."<sup>24</sup> He calls it the "sepulcher of Mexicans and Filipinos." "All the treasures of this world," he declared, "could not compensate for the necessity of living there or of traveling the road between Acapulco and Mexico." In 1598 the royal treasury officials wrote to the moribund old King of the hardships of existence in a "hot and sickly land, where one lives with great risk to his health,"<sup>25</sup> and eight years later Juan Rodríguez de Salamanca petitioned to be "freed from the captivity" of serving as royal factor in this unwholesome port.<sup>26</sup>

Lafond de Lurey writes of Acapulco, "this city so famed in the annals of commerce": "It is quite probable that this place, when it was the entrepot of the treasures of Mexico and of the Indies, saw as much wealth pass through it as did Genoa or Venice. However, not the least vestige of all this remains. Now one sees only the most paltry village. . . . In the time of its greatest prosperity it counted 4000 inhabitants, and this figure reached 12000 at the season of the arrival of the galleons.

"The climate is frightful: a sky of bronze, a stifling heat, and no motion of the air. There is nothing to compensate for this desolate picture. The land, except for some trees about the houses, is stricken with sterility. There are neither streams, nor grass,

<sup>23</sup>He says that bilious fevers and the cholera morbus were rampant at Acapulco, as yellow fever was at Vera Cruz. The air was poisoned by the miasmatic exhalations from a marsh near the town. The annual disappearance at a certain season of the water in this swamp caused the death of great numbers of fish, whose putrefaction diffused noxious emanations through the air about the town. An unusually sudden and low drop in the temperature in the latter part of the night was also very dangerous to the health of those who were not acclimated. *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup>Anda to Arriaga, July 7, 1768, *A. de I.*, 108-3-17. Anda preferred Val de Banderas or Chacala to Acapulco. Of the former region he said: "It is a country abounding in everything. It has good climate, good water, and plenty of wood, while the road thence to Mexico, for 150 leagues, can be travelled in a carriage, and through the thickest populated and most flourishing part of New Spain."

<sup>25</sup>*Oficiales reales, op. cit.*

<sup>26</sup>Rodríguez to the King, January 7, 1606, *A. de I.*, 60-4-30.

nor flowers, nor shade (*ni ruisseaux, ni gazons, ni fleurs, ni ombrages*); but everywhere extraordinary landscapes, a surface that has been upheaved, and burned-up valleys that betray an earth tormented by subterranean fires."<sup>27</sup>

When Duflot de Mofras visited Acapulco in 1840 he said: "The town of Acapulco is considerably fallen from her ancient splendor."<sup>28</sup> But Acapulco was never "splendid," even during the heyday of her fairs. Her habitual squalidness was then only the better set off by the contrast of the motley and picturesque concourse that gathered to the *feria* and of the rich merchandise piled high in her warehouses. When all this heterogeneous crowd went northward into the interior with its laden caravans of mules, or westward by the galleon to the Philippines, Acapulco relapsed into her wonted insignificance.

The administrative machinery of the port of Acapulco can be classified under three general categories: (1) the castellan, (2) the *oficiales reales*, and (3) the various subordinate officials. The superior authority of the port was known as the *castellano*, or castellan. In early times his position was that of *alcalde mayor*, and as such his functions were predominantly judicial and administrative.<sup>29</sup> Though he continued in the exercise of these duties,<sup>30</sup> with the construction of the Castle of San Diego his office also assumed a military character, which was comprehended within the title of castellan, or warden, of that fortress, and by that name he is henceforth generally known. In later times he also acted as "Deputy-Governor of the coast of the South Sea,"<sup>31</sup>

<sup>27</sup>*Op. cit.*, pp. 89-90.

<sup>28</sup>*Exploration du Territoire de l'Oregon, des Californies, et de la Mer Vermeille* (Paris, 1844), I, 144.

<sup>29</sup>"Ordenamos á los virreyes de Nueva España, que . . . pongan en el puerto de Acapulco, demas de los oficiales reales que alli estuvieren, una persona de mucha confianza y satisfaccion, con título de *alcalde mayor*." *Leyes*, lib. 9, tit. 45, ley 74. Though this law, which was issued in 1604, would appear to have established the office for the first time, a law of 1597 refers to an official with the same title at Acapulco. *Ibid.*, ley 54. He is moreover mentioned in official correspondence of an earlier date. Viceroy Villamanrique to Diego de Molina Padilla, October 20, 1586, *Depósito hidrográfico, Coleccion de Navarrete*, t. 18, no. 36.

<sup>30</sup>"The Castellan who is also *Justicia Mayor*, or chief Magistrate." Gemelli, *op. cit.*

<sup>31</sup>*Método que se observa constantemente en México, Acapulco y Manila para recibir y despachar todos los años el Galeon de Filipinas* (Cádiz,

while in the *Adiciones*, or supplementary *reglamento*, of 1769 he is designated as *gobernador*, or governor.<sup>32</sup> With such a combination of offices in the person of a single official, his jurisdiction was necessarily very wide, whether acting in his individual capacity, or in conjunction with the royal treasury officials. Above all, he was commissioned with the general supervision of the receipt and the despatch of the galleon, as well as of the conduct of the *feria*. As a consequence of the official venality prevalent at Acapulco he gained annually by different irregular perquisites as high as 20,000 pesos,<sup>33</sup> though his salary was but a small fraction of that sum.

Sometimes a special commissioner or *visitador* was sent down to Acapulco by the viceroy. This officer then held precedence over the ordinary body of officials for the duration of the *visita*. In 1704 Viceroy Albuquerque appointed to this place Joseph de Veitia Linage,<sup>34</sup> the author of the *Norte de la Contratacion*, the classical work on the administration of the trade between Spain and America,<sup>35</sup> and an official of wide experience in the commercial service of the government. The viceroy characterized him as an official of "unusual honor, integrity, and zeal," while the King declared himself and Albuquerque well satisfied with his work at Acapulco.<sup>36</sup> Sometimes Acapulco came within the scope of a more general *visita*.<sup>37</sup> Thus, in 1636 Pedro de Quiroga y Moya threw the trade into confusion by his rigorous exercise of this office, but the old easy-going régime at the port was in a measure restored by his successor in the same office, Palafox y Mendoza. Other examples of visitors-general who held charge at Acapulco were Pedro de Gálvez, who followed shortly after Palafox in 1650, the Marqués de Rubí in 1764, and José de Gálvez in 1766.

The essentially fiscal side of the administration at Acapulco

1763). This is a bound manuscript contained in the Bancroft Library, of the University of California. It is a compilation of the general regulations then applicable to the trade and of specific orders to different officials at Acapulco.

<sup>32</sup>*Adiciones con que su Magestad manda siga por ahora el comercio de Manila con la Nueva España*, sect. 21.

<sup>33</sup>Gemelli, *op. cit.*

<sup>34</sup>Albuquerque to the King, May 28, 1704, *A. de I.*, 68-3-1.

<sup>35</sup>*Norte de la Contratacion de las Indias Occidentales* (Madrid, 1672).

<sup>36</sup>The King to Veitia Linage, January 19, 1704, *A. de I.*, 155-2-4.

<sup>37</sup>See Priestley, *José de Gálvez Visitor-General of New Spain (1765-1771)*, (1916), 110, *et seq.*

was in the hands of the two *oficiales reales*, or royal treasury officials. In the beginning of the history of the Philippine trade there was no separate customs service at Acapulco, but that port was under the immediate jurisdiction of the treasury officials at the capital. However, with the growing importance of that traffic a separate fiscal management was early introduced, though it continued responsible to the superior financial authority at the capital. In 1593 a *factor* was commissioned by Viceroy Velasco with "jurisdiction over everything pertaining to the royal treasury."<sup>38</sup> The establishment of a distinct financial régime for the port dates from 1597, when a royal *cédula* created the offices of *contador* and *proveedor*, as the two *oficiales reales* were individually designated.<sup>39</sup> Acting together these officials constituted the local *contaduría*, or bureau of accounts, with charge of the double-locked *caja*, or chest, in which the moneys and financial records of the port were kept. They were above all customs officers in the modern sense of the term, i. e., they collected the duties levied on the cargoes of the galleons.<sup>40</sup> Whatever expenditures had to be made from the funds thus deposited in the *caja* were made with their joint authorization. Besides these more strictly financial functions, the *oficiales* had, when associated together, wide supervisory authority over all the operations between the coming and the clearing of the galleon. In order to make sure of the completion of this work they were required to remain in Acapulco until the middle of April, and might then leave for Mexico only with the consent of the viceroy. To prepare for the arrival of the next *nao*, they must leave the capital for their post on the day following the Feast of the Conception.<sup>41</sup> Some of the administrative field at the port they shared with the castellan, with whom, however, their relations were not always entirely amicable,<sup>42</sup> and, like the castellan, they were subject to the orders of the viceroy.

In his individual capacity each of the *oficiales* had a separate set of duties. Thus, the *proveedor* inherited the attributes of the

<sup>38</sup>Fonseca and Urrutia, *Historia General de Real Hacienda*, IV, 461.

<sup>39</sup>*Leyes*, lib. 8, tit. 4, ley 39.

<sup>40</sup>"Porque hasta ahora ha estado la cobranza de estos derechos á cargo de nuestros oficiales de Méjico: Mandamos que se abstengan, y las dejen al proveedor y contador." *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup>*Método*, op. cit., p. 3.

<sup>42</sup>Pedro Alonso Vásquez to the King, April 16, 1601, *A. de I.*, 60-4-30.

*factor*, and was the purchasing agent of the port. As such his most serious task was the supplying of the galleon with arms, provisions, and other ship's supplies for the return voyage. The *contador*, on the other hand, was more directly responsible for the auditing or certification of the register and other papers pertaining to the cargo of the galleon, whether that of the incoming *nao* or the silver for the return voyage.<sup>43</sup>

The most important of the third class of functionaries was probably the *guardamayor*, or chief officer of the port. He had immediate charge of the guards who served on shore and on the galleon when in port. He carried out the orders of the castellan and of the royal officials, and was particularly the executive officer of the court over which the former might preside in his capacity as *alcalde mayor*.<sup>44</sup> The *escribano de real hacienda* was the chief clerk of the *contaduría* or *tribunal de cuentas* composed of the *oficiales reales*. In accordance with his notarial authority he countersigned all the important official records of transactions. The *comisario de guías* issued the licenses for the transport of the silks and other goods to points inland.

Ecclesiastical authority at Acapulco was wielded by a parish priest or *cura*. "The Curate," says Gemelli Careri, "tho' the King's allowance to him be but 180 pieces of Eight, makes 14,000 a Year, exacting a great rate for burying of strangers, not only that die at *Acapulco*, but at Sea aboard the Ships from China and *Peru*; as for instance he will expect 1000 pieces of Eight for a rich Merchant."<sup>45</sup>

The proceedings which attended the reception of the Manila Galleon, the disposal of her cargo, and the preparations for her return as the Acapulco Galleon, were regulated with as great minuteness of detail as accompanied the operations at Manila. Especially complete were the provisions of the *Adiciones* drawn up in 1769 after Gálvez' peremptory reorganization of the Acapulco administration and after the disclosures made by the visitor-general of conditions at the port had reached the notice of the central government.<sup>46</sup> All the regulations contained in these amendments to

<sup>43</sup>*Leyes, op. cit.*

<sup>44</sup>*Método, op. cit.*, pp. 156-68.

<sup>45</sup>Gemelli, *op. cit.*, p. 503.

<sup>46</sup>*Adiciones, op. cit.*

the *cédula* of 1734 were by no means innovations, though some were suggested by the results of the recent investigations at Acapulco. But for the most part they were the incorporation in more systematic or codified form of viceregal instructions and ordinances, as well as slightly modified restatements of the directions contained in the earlier statutes governing the conduct of the trade.<sup>47</sup> There is displayed, however, a more meticulous anxiety to secure their scrupulous observance, a more highly complicated system of precautions, dictated by a realization of the futility of former prescriptions to secure an honest administration of the galleon traffic.

On the first sight of the approaching *nao* by the lookout stationed on the high *Mira* to the rear of the town a launch was sent out to meet her and escort her into the harbor. This boat was to see that no one approached the galleon before she was moored, and turned over to the custody of the port officials. In case the galleon reached the vicinity of the entrance during the night she had to lie to in the offing, until daylight and the veering of the breeze to landward enabled her to work her way in through the narrow channel of the *Boca Chica*. At such a time contraband goods were often lowered over the sides into boats under cover of the darkness, and carried to a place of concealment on shore. Once inside the harbor and the formal salutes exchanged with the guns of the castle, an additional guard was placed upon her, with orders to prevent any unauthorized communication between vessel and shore. Any craft which approached without permission from the *guardamayor*, or his superiors, was promptly turned away.

As soon as the galleon was at her place in front of the town, the castellan and *oficiales reales* went on board to make their first visit of inspection. The latter received the ship's register and book of manifests, or *libro de sobordo*, from the hands of the *contador* and the *veedor* of the *nao*. The register was then sent off to the capital by special courier, and delivered over to the superior bureau of accounts, which assessed the duties for the cargo on the basis of its contents, and then returned it to the coast.<sup>48</sup> The regulations designed the first visit of inspection to be a zealous search for contraband lading, but it usually amounted in reality to a very peremptory scrutiny of the hold. When the letter of the law had

<sup>47</sup>*Método, op. cit.*

<sup>48</sup>*Leyes, lib. 9, tit. 45, ley 60.*

been complied with in this fashion and healths drunk all around, both parties proceeded to the real business of the occasion,—the making of arrangements for the landing of the illegal merchandise.

After these preliminary formalities were concluded the work of disembarcation began. The passengers were first allowed to leave the ship, and those who were in health walked in procession to church, preceded by the image of the Virgin, while the sick were taken to the hospital.<sup>49</sup> The first goods carried ashore were the personal baggage of the passengers, and the unloading of the main body of the cargo did not begin until these effects were on shore. In fact the hatches over that part of the hold remained sealed in the meantime. The laws required that, when once commenced, the landing of the commercial cargo be carried out as expeditiously as possible and that the proper official surveillance be exercised at every step in the transfer of the goods to the beach.<sup>50</sup> One of the two *oficicles reales* had to be present on the ship at all times, to see that nothing was sent off which was not duly marked and registered. Each lighter-full of bales or chests must proceed as directly to the landing-place as the oarsmen could row it, and on the way thither no speech must be held with any suspicious looking craft that might be lurking in its path. As each lot of goods was landed, the second royal official, or his deputy, compared its distinguishing marks with the corresponding invoices in the book of manifests.

Throughout most of the history of the commerce the shipper's own sworn statement—the *factura jurada*—was accepted without question as a declaration of the contents of the respective package. The only alternative was of course the actual examination of the interior of the bale or chest. However, the aversion to this procedure was so great on the part of the Manila interests and those in Mexico concerned in evading the law of the *perniso*, that few officials were daring—or disinterested—enough to defy opinion in both communities by resorting to such a measure, logical and just as it was. The most hated name in the history of the commerce was that of Pedro de Quiroga, who opened packages indiscriminately in 1636, thereby violating tradition and the gentle-

<sup>49</sup>Gemelli, *op. cit.*, p. 500.

<sup>50</sup>*Adiciones, op. cit.*

men's understanding, that were the guiding principles of the commerce after the early traders had established the rule of illegality. Quiroga's revolutionary activities were not allowed to become a precedent for the future guidance of the port officials, for not only did a *cédula* of two years later prohibit the opening of packages without first notifying the consignor, or his agent, of such intention,<sup>51</sup> but an order of 1640 to the visitor Palafox forbade him to make "any innovations in the opening of packages."<sup>52</sup> In view of the vague wording of the law of 1604,<sup>53</sup> this meant in practice a return to the old lenient régime, whose leniency could at least be condoned by a liberal interpretation of that statute. Again, during the few years when the *cédula* of 1720 was in operation, the physical examination of goods was insisted upon.<sup>54</sup> However, the *Reglamento* of 1734 restored the old custom to a status of legality,<sup>55</sup> and the *Adiciones* of 1769, while granting the power to open packages that appeared particularly suspicious, did not prescribe such procedure as the ordinary rule of action, but only an expedient to be resorted to in unusual cases.<sup>56</sup> Finally, it must be remembered that, in view of the size of the cargo and the methods of packing employed at Manila, the opening of all the bales and boxes was out of the question, on account of the sheer physical labor that would have been involved, as well as on account of the derangement of the goods which it would have entailed.

After the registered cargo had been accounted for in accordance with the certified invoices the goods found to be consistent with their bills of lading were removed to the warehouses, where they were stored, in bond as it were, until the opening of the fair. In case any lot of goods was confiscated such merchandise

<sup>51</sup>*Real cédula*, December 8, 1636, *A. de I.*, 105-2-12.

<sup>52</sup>The King to Palafox, February 14, 1640, *A. de I.*, 105-2-12.

<sup>53</sup>"En el puerto de Acapulco se abran los registros de todo lo que se trajere de Filipinas, por la persona á quien lo cometiere el virey de Nueva España, y oficiales de nuestra real hacienda del dicho puerto, y juntos vean y reconozcan los fardos y cofres, y hagan escrutinio y diligencia, *cuanto sea necesario* para entender lo que viniere fuera de registro y permission." *Leyes*, lib. 9, tit. 45, ley. 60.

<sup>54</sup>*Extracto historial*, f. 39b.

<sup>55</sup>*Ibid.*, f. 208.

<sup>56</sup>*Op. cit.*

was deposited in the royal storehouse until it could be sold on the King's account. Meanwhile, on the return of the courier from Mexico with the statement of the duties which the central *contaduría* had levied on the cargo, the *compromisarios*, or agents, of the Manila shippers arranged with the *oficiales reales* for the lump payment of the tax, which was assessed pro rata on the consignment of each merchant. When all the goods entered on the register and presumably comprehended within the limits of the *permiso* had been landed, the second *visita* was made for the purpose of discovering if anything remained concealed on board. This ceremony completed, the galleon was turned over to the officers of the local *maestranza*, or shipyard, for the careening and repairs which were necessary to fit her for her return voyage.

The Acapulco *feria*, which was opened after the termination of these preliminary proceedings, Humboldt called "the most renowned fair of the world."<sup>57</sup> Its general characteristics were similar to those of the fairs long held at Jalapa on the other side of Mexico and at Portobello on the isthmus. There were the same regulated transactions between two groups of merchants—three in the case of Acapulco—proceeding from widely separated regions of the same empire, and the same ephemeral transformation of an otherwise unimportant place into a city of feverish and picturesque activity.

Although the approach of the galleon was known as soon as a courier reached the capital from some point on the northwest coast with news of its having been sighted or with its first *pliego* of papers,<sup>58</sup> the official proclamation for the opening of the fair

<sup>57</sup>*Political Essay*, IV, 71.

<sup>58</sup>"We stood E. S. E. to draw near Land, and set ashore the Messenger who is to carry the letters to Mexico. . . . Saturday 5th, in the Morning the new Boat was Launch'd, to land the Messenger with the Letters for Mexico, and Madrid. . . . but the News is known at Mexico by another Express sent by the Alcade of Chiamela, as soon as a Centinel from the Tops of the Mountains discovers a Sail at Sea. Upon the uncertain Tidings sent by the Alcade of a great Ship seen at Sea, which may as well be an Enemy, they begin their Prayers at Mexico, which are continued till the Arrival of the Messenger with the Letters from Aboard. When he Arrives all the Bells Ring for Joy; and this Noise lasts, till a third Express comes from Acapulco, who brings the Viceroy Advice of the Galeon being come to an Anchor in the Port." Gemelli, *op. cit.*, p. 498. In 1757 Governor Arandía ordered the discontinuance of the "inveterate" custom of sending off the ship's papers from

was not issued in Mexico and the other cities of the viceroyalty until the *nao* had reached her destination, and the duplicate *pliegos* had arrived from Acapulco. However, before the day set by the viceroy thousands were pouring southward over the "China Road" to the coast of the Pacific. There were traders of every category,—from Indian hawkers and hucksters to great merchants of Mexico; soldiers and King's officials; begging friars and cursing muleteers and porters; and the fringe of followers who went to minister to the pleasures of the rest. In Acapulco they mingled with those who had come from Peru, or with those whom the galleon had brought from the Orient. For the greater picturesqueness of the throng the latter added the Filipino and Lascar seamen, some Chinamen, and perhaps a few Kaffirs that had been carried from the Mozambique country by way of Goa. Gemelli Careri thus writes of the metamorphosis which he saw come over the town in two days of January, 1697: "Most of the Officers and Merchants that came aboard the *Peru* Ships, went to lie ashore, bringing with them two Millions of pieces of Eight to lay out in Commodities of *China*; so that *Friday 25 Acapulco* was converted from a rustick Village into a populous City; and the Huts before inhabited by dark *Mulattos* were all fill'd with gay *Spaniards*; to which was added on *Saturday 26th* a great course of Merchants from *Mexico*, with abundance of pieces of Eight and Commodities of the Country and of Europe. *Sunday 27th* there continu'd to come in abundance of *Commodities* and Provisions to serve so great a multitude of Strangers."<sup>59</sup>

For the direction of the actual commercial transactions at the fair, as distinguished from the supervisory authority of the regular port officials, the viceroy named two representatives of the trading interest of the capital. These men, with an agent from Puebla, were to treat with the *compromisarios*, or deputies, of Manila for the terms of exchange, such as the price at which each class of goods was to be sold.<sup>60</sup> The settlement of the sale

Navidad or thereabout. He charged that the person entrusted with them, who bore the high-sounding title of *Capitán Gentil-hombre de los Pliegos*, or "Gentleman-Captain of the Papers," made his journey across country a business trip, which profited him more than it did the Crown whose commission he bore. *Ordenanzas de Marina, Adicion*, art. 23, p. 11.

<sup>59</sup>*Op. cit.*, p. 503.

<sup>60</sup>*Método, op. cit.*, pp. 44-50.

value of the cargo in this fashion and the rigid observance of the limitation of the *permiso* would have precluded the possibility of any subsequent bargaining between the merchants of the two parties. However, as between the official theory and the actual practice of the traders there was the usual inconsistency. There was always more or less haggling and dealing. Though a conspiracy by either side to force a scale of prices on the other was not permitted by the law, the *compromisarios* and supercargoes from Manila often found themselves the victims of an agreement among the united Mexican interests. Sometimes a combination of the richer trading houses of the capital attempted to dictate prices to the Manileños, or they might delay making their purchases as long as possible, in order to force the latter to sell at low figures for the sake of returning to Manila with the proceeds by the galleon of the year. The islander's chance for a favorable market depended largely at such times on the strength of the competition of the Peruvians. As the latter were usually better supplied with silver, they did all possible to bargain independently with them.<sup>61</sup> In case the Lima Ship failed to come, or in the rather unusual eventuality of a union of the Mexican and Peruvian buyers, the Manileños were liable to be driven to hard straits to dispose of their cargo at any advantage. Their position was often made more difficult by the interested collusion of the port officials with their rivals, as well as by the vexations and extortions to which those officials subjected them.<sup>62</sup> Thus, the officials sometimes delayed the publication of the *bandos* of the viceroy for the opening of the fair until a few days before the date set for the clearing of the galleon for Manila, a maneuver which had the same effect as the decision of the Mexican buyers to withhold their purchases

<sup>61</sup>Witness Gemelli's experience with a Peruvian: "Tuesday 5th, I was much annoy'd with the Heat and Gnats; but much more on Wednesday 6th, by the babling of a Merchant of Peru, for he according to the Custom of that Nation, endeavouring to talk me into a Bargain, gave me a violent Headach, and yet we concluded upon nothing. The Spaniards of New Spain are of another Temper, for they deal Generously and Gentilely as becomes them." *Op. cit.*, p. 504.

<sup>62</sup>*Leyes*, lib. 9, tit. 45, ley 61 (1633); the City to the King, June 15, 1677, *A. de I.*, 67-6-28; the King to Viceroy Moctezuma, June 5, 1697, *A. de I.*, 105-2-3; the Bishop of Nueva Segovia to the King, July 22, 1713, *A. de I.*, 68-5-19.

until the last moment.<sup>63</sup> But neither were the Manileños without guilt. The *trampas de la China*, or "Chinese frauds," by which they strove to defeat the purpose of the *permiso* restriction, and to introduce their excess lading into New Spain without paying either duty to the Crown or composition money to the Crown's officials, certainly gave them little ground for complaining of the tricks and frauds of their rivals or of the officials who connived at the sharp practices of these rivals, and in fact emulated them by their own conduct.<sup>64</sup> Or again, it might be the smaller American buyers who suffered, when the more powerful merchants arranged with the Philippine committee to take over the larger part, or all, of the cargo. Sometimes the latter bought the mass of the cargo before the galleon had reached Acapulco, by sending out an agent to the ship as she proceeded down the northwest coast. Finally, these Mexican and Peruvian traders merely claimed consignments made to them by their agent in the islands under a fictitious entry in the galleon's register. Thus, the fair, which was designed to proceed with "all formality and quietude,"<sup>65</sup> was only too often a hurly-burly of questionable dealings and violent contentions, mitigated only by the restraint of Spanish *hidalguía* and the occasional vigilance of loyal officials.

All sales made in the ordinary course of the fair had to be registered in detail at the *contaduría*. These certificates of sale not only served as basis for the issuing of the licenses which had to accompany every consignment destined for the interior, but such records were essential in computing the aggregate returns of silver to Manila. All the silver which entered Acapulco was, moreover, required to be accompanied by a license issued at the place from which it had come. In fact, so great was the anxiety of the official regulations to keep the trade within bounds that scarcely a peso was permitted to circulate about Acapulco without being registered somewhere. No buyer was allowed to remove his purchases from Acapulco until the fair was officially proclaimed to be closed, nor could one of the Manileños anticipate the arrival

<sup>63</sup>Juan Quixano, *Procurador-general* of the Philippines, to the King, 1679, *A. de I.*, 67-6-28.

<sup>64</sup>Humboldt, *op. cit.*, p. 73.

<sup>65</sup>*Adiciones, op. cit.*

at Mexico of the authorized mule-trains by forwarding goods ahead to be sold before that date.

When that time came the long caravans of mules laden with merchandise trailed out of Acapulco and up the mountain road into the interior. The more affluent merchants and passengers off the galleon went north in cavalcades, though some, like Gemelli, preferred the hardier and more sure-footed mules for their journey. With them went all those who, in one way or another, had shared in the harvest that attained the *feria*. The Peruvians, who may have carried on their operations quite openly at Acapulco, or more clandestinely at the nearby haven of Puerto Marqués, boarded their ship and cleared her for the south. There only remained the permanent inhabitants of the place,<sup>66</sup> and those who were engaged in the preparation of the galleon for her return voyage.

In New Spain the "China Road" ranked in importance with the eastward *camino* by Puebla and Orizaba to Vera Cruz. About 110 leagues, by the computation of the *arrieros*, it stretched north from Acapulco to Mexico through the modern states of Guerrero and Morelos.<sup>67</sup> Its upper course followed approximately the route of the unfinished extension of the National Railway from its terminal at Balsas through Cuernavaca to the capital. As the road led out of Acapulco it entered the rugged defiles of the Sierra Madre del Sur,—“vast high Mountains,” Gemelli Careri called them.<sup>68</sup> Through this wild region the only signs of habitation were the inns located every three or four leagues, and an occasional Indian village. The road led through forests of Brazil-wood, over steep mountains, like that of the Papagayo, and across the river of the same name, and thence by the pleasant town of Chilpancingo, lying among corn fields. This was the most considerable place between Cuernavaca and Acapulco, and had several Spanish in-

<sup>66</sup>“*Thursday 7th*, . . . the Porters of *Acapulco* made a sort of Funeral, carrying one of their number on a Beer, and bewailing him as if he were dead, because their Harvest was at an end; for some of them had got three pieces of Eight a day, and the worst of them one.” Gemelli, *op. cit.*

<sup>67</sup>Humboldt, *Political Essay*, I, int., XXXVIII-XLI. There is a large detailed map of the road in Humboldt's *Atlas géographique et physique du royaume de la Nouvelle Espagne* (Paris, 1811), *carte 5*. See also Terry, *Mexico—Handbook for Travellers* (Mexico and Boston, 1909), 432-61.

<sup>68</sup>Churchill, *Voyages*, IV, 505.

habitants. Above Zumpango there followed nine leagues of travel through a barren plain, which Gemelli likened to "that of Tirol." This brought the road to the Rio Mexcala, or Rio de las Balsas, as it was called from the rafts on which travelers crossed, propelled by swimming Indians. The next stop was at Tuspa, or Pueblo Nuevo, as Gemelli knew it in 1698, a village situated by a lake. Thence the way led through a mountainous country for some twelve leagues to another river at Puente de Ixtla, and beyond through a district of wooded hills and Indian villages to the rich valley of Cuernavaca. This favored region contained a large number of Spanish inhabitants, and in it were situated the wide domains of the Marqués del Valle, or the head of the Cortéz family. After the capital, this was one of the best markets in all the viceroyalty for the goods which the mule caravans brought that way from Acapulco. From the brim of the ardent *tierra caliente* the road climbed onto the great central plateau, over the encircling fringe of mountains and through a large pine forest, from which it descended by the Subida del Arenal into the Valley of Mexico. Thence it was a frequented route across a cultivated plain by the village of San Agustín de las Cuevas and the customs stations, to the causeway that led over the lake to the gates of the capital.

Travel over the "China Road" was by mule-back, and little was done to make it usable for wheeled traffic until the last years of the galleon trade. After the discontinuance of the latter great blocks of stone lay alongside the highway that was to have been.<sup>69</sup> Conditions of travel were always very primitive. Accommodations were few and discomforts were manifold.<sup>70</sup> The *arrieros*, who conducted the long trains of mules, camped in the fields or woods with their charges. The ordinary traveler also spent the nights on the way, lying "under the Canopy of Heaven,"<sup>71</sup> unless he were

<sup>69</sup>Petit Thouars, *Voyage autour du monde*, II, 204.

<sup>70</sup>*Dificili et periculoso itinere, ob montium altitudinem petrarumque aspera, frequentia item flumina, densissima nemora, incolarum denique triste et humile ingenium, maxime autem ob eorum infrequentiam. . . . Viatores toto hoc itinere mirum in modum infestantur a culicibus, mosquitos vocant Hispani.* Laet, *Novus Orbis* (1633), 238.

<sup>71</sup>Gemelli, *op. cit.* One night a severe earthquake took place while Gemelli was lying in an open field near the River Balsas: and again while he was sleeping among the pines above Cuernavaca there was a fall of snow, that covered his quilt, "by which," he says, "you may guess how Hot I lay."

able to make the widely scattered inns at nightfall. These inns were very rude hostelries, except at Chilpancingo and Cuernavaca, and were usually conducted by Indian *mesoneros*, who, though obliging, like the one Gemelli encountered at Amacusac, knew little of the fine art of tavern-keeping. The Italian globe-trotter passed the night in a *posada* at Atlaxo, which consisted of five cabins, "Thatch'd and Palisado'd about." "Here a legion of Gnats(?) sucked my Blood all Night," he complains, while the Tarascan inn-keeper forced him to pay a "Piece-of-Eight for a Pullet, and about a Penny a piece for Eggs." On the edibility of *tortillas* Gemelli remarked: "Hot they are tolerable; but when cold I could scarce get them down." However, he was compensated for the fare at the inns by the game which he was able to kill along the way. The Jesuit Père Taillandier, who went down from Mexico to Acapulco in 1711, says of the facilities for travelers: "The poor hostelries of Mexico had accustomed us to do without a bed, and all the other *douceurs* which the traveller enjoys in France."<sup>72</sup> When Teodoro de Croix journeyed over the road in 1767 to take up his duties as castellan at Acapulco he described the roads as "impracticable," and had to carry all his provisions from Mexico and sleep beneath the stars (*à la belle étoile*).<sup>73</sup>

<sup>72</sup>Père Taillandier to Père Willard, February 20, 1711, *Lettres édifiantes*, XI, 381-87. Père Taillandier was ten days on the road. Gemelli Careri took thirteen days to cover the distance between Acapulco and Mexico. *Op. cit.*, pp. 505-7.

<sup>73</sup>Teodoro de Croix to [Viceroy Croix], January 17, 1767, *Correspondence du Marquis de Croix*, 204.